

"PERFINS"

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HOW I SORT

Charles Bein

Sorting as you all know, is a most time involving job, especially when you have quantities to deal with. Nevertheless I always let several thousand perfins accumulate before I commence action. It takes longer but it is worth it; the more material you have to go through the more duplicates you find and many of these can be thrown out at once unless they bear postmarks or parts of postmarks. If you do your sorting more frequently and in smaller quantities, you will have to go over the same ground time after time and it would take more time in the long run. Postmarks are most useful for tracing purposes and are often the means of establishing the identity of a perfin user, in spite of slight modifications which his Die may have undergone in the course of time.

To facilitate sorting I have evolved a number of gadgets which I find indispensable and about which you may like to hear. First there is the large "accumulating box" into which I put everything that comes along. At a convenient time, box No. 1 is closed and box No. 2 started—you have to do things systematically or you won't get anywhere! I take the perfins out by the handful and sort them in alphabetical order on a specially prepared "Chessboard". A large piece of cardboard divided into 25 squares, marked A, B, C, to W, the 24th square is for XYZ and the 25th for various. When the squares are filled up, I transfer each pile into a "harmonica" or expanding file and start all over again until accumulation No. 1 has been worked off. The next step is to break up the contents of each pocket of the expanding file for which purpose the "chessboard" is again used, the single letter perfins are put to one side because there is no room for them on the board; on the square marked A, I put the AA's, on square B the AB's and so on. When there is sufficient material on the board, I transfer the piles into an-

Catalog pages—A1-2, A3-4, B1-2, E3-4, C1-2, C3-4, D1-2, E1-2, F1-2
Code page and list of foreign countries using perfins (combined.)

Back numbers are available at 2c each, also catalog pages while they last. The following are available:
Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,

other expanding file, this time a much smaller one, which in this instance contains only perfins beginning with the letter A. The final step is to break up the contents of each pocket once more into the necessary sub-sections, and these I place in correct alphabetical order in a small stamp album of the stock book type, with 7 transparent strips per page, which will probably be filled to capacity with the A's. Then at long last the finely ground material is ready for comparison with the mounted material in the album and a beginning can be made with the picking out of new perfins and the addition to the page of new denominations or otherwise desirable items such as pairs or blocks, double perfs, interesting freaks, postmarks, etc. Of course, pages have to be rearranged and remounted at times, and new pages inserted but that is part of the game and common to all types of collecting on loose leaves.

Right from the beginning I started to compile an index of my perfins in a separate book and I have continued it ever since. I no longer enter page numbers but it still serves its purpose: you are sometimes under the impression that you have seen a certain perfin already and not finding it in the album you begin to wonder whether the page has been misplaced; a glance at the index clears things up very quickly (at least in my case.) What is not in the index is not in the album and vice versa. The index is incomplete in as far as details are concerned, there is only one entry for C. B. & Co. and for variants the album has to be referred to.

If anyone should ask for my reason for collecting perfins according to issues, my reply would be this: I look upon each perfin as upon "a stamp issued in an unknown country" and I am trying to ascertain the first and all subsequent issues of that country, same as orthodox stamp collectors had to do years ago when there was no such thing as a Scott, Gibbons, or Yvert catalogue. Substitute for the word "country" the words "Business firm" and you have it in a nutshell. I am naturally trying all the time to ascertain user's identities as well and I have definitely nailed down large numbers of them, but many of the older ones will, I am afraid, remain unknown for ever.